

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 68

46TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2004

INTRODUCED BY

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A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, THE NEW MEXICO HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION AND OTHERS, TO INVESTIGATE AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT THE VIABILITY AND THE PROCESS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE COVERAGE FOR THE UNINSURED IN NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, existing New Mexico law does not provide a system for universal health insurance coverage for its residents; and

WHEREAS, businesses in New Mexico are not required to provide health insurance coverage for their employees and dependents other than workers' compensation coverage for work-related injuries; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico sponsors or provides a variety of health care coverage plans, including medicaid, the state children's health insurance plan, the New Mexico health

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1 insurance alliance, the New Mexico medical insurance pool for
2 high-risk individuals, the New Mexico public school insurance
3 authority, the retiree health care authority and the risk
4 management division of the general services department; and

5 WHEREAS, there are health and human service programs for
6 specialty populations provided by the department of health, the
7 children, youth and families department and others; and

8 WHEREAS, many counties have health care coverage programs
9 for the indigent; and

10 WHEREAS, most individuals over sixty-five years of age in
11 New Mexico are covered by the federal medicare program; and

12 WHEREAS, despite the availability of this wide array of
13 coverage, New Mexico has approximately four hundred thousand
14 people, which represents twenty-one percent of the state's
15 population, who have no health coverage at all; and

16 WHEREAS, of the four hundred thousand, approximately sixty
17 thousand are children and the remaining three hundred forty
18 thousand are adults between the ages of nineteen and sixty-
19 five; and

20 WHEREAS, more than eighty percent of the uninsured adults
21 are employed, and many work for an employer that does not offer
22 health insurance coverage; and

23 WHEREAS, health care providers in New Mexico sustain
24 significant losses in revenue when they provide uncompensated
25 care to the uninsured population, estimated at between two

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1 hundred million dollars (\$200,000,000) and three hundred
2 million dollars (\$300,000,000) in lost revenue for hospitals
3 alone; and

4 WHEREAS, losses from uncompensated care could be
5 significantly reduced and health plan profits significantly
6 increased by ensuring health care coverage for the uninsured;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, employment-based health insurance coverage
9 provides access to the latest advances in medical care for
10 thousands of New Mexicans; and

11 WHEREAS, people lacking health insurance coverage have
12 poorer health outcomes, are more likely to miss needed
13 treatment or medications and are more likely to have chronic
14 conditions that are not properly managed; and

15 WHEREAS, the lack of health insurance coverage for so many
16 New Mexicans results in a social and economic burden for the
17 affected families, employers, health care providers and the
18 state of New Mexico;

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
20 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the human services department, in
21 collaboration with the department of health, the New Mexico
22 health policy commission and others, be requested to
23 investigate and make recommendations about the feasibility and
24 process necessary to provide health insurance coverage for the
25 uninsured in New Mexico; and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the investigation explore the
2 potential for existing health plans in New Mexico to pay a
3 premium tax in an amount sufficient to enable the state to act
4 as a purchasing agent to pool these revenues to purchase
5 coverage for the uninsured with sliding-scale cost-sharing
6 contributions; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the investigation also explore
8 the potential for assessing a fee on employers that do not
9 offer health insurance to their employees to increase the funds
10 available to purchase coverage for the uninsured; and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the investigation explore the
12 potential for collaboration between or expansion of existing
13 health plans, which serve New Mexicans, as vehicles for
14 providing health care coverage for the uninsured in New Mexico;
15 and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the investigation consider the
17 benefits of utilizing the approved health insurance and
18 flexibility and accountability demonstration waiver, commonly
19 referred to as the state coverage initiative, as a vehicle to
20 provide health insurance coverage for the uninsured beyond the
21 currently projected population; and

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the vital role of the state's
23 safety net providers, including county and community hospitals,
24 rural primary care clinics, other providers and networks of
25 providers be recognized and preserved in this investigation;

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1 and

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that an investigation of the need
3 to reinstitute a certificate of need to avoid duplication of
4 facilities or equipment, and to ensure appropriate use of
5 scarce resources be included; and

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a report of the
7 recommendations and findings be presented to the legislative
8 health and human services committee at its October 2004 meeting
9 and that two copies be provided to the legislative council
10 service library; and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
12 sent to the secretary of human services, the secretary of
13 health and the director of the New Mexico health policy
14 commission.

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